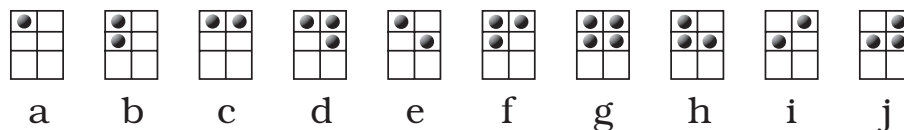


The Braille System: The Language of Touch

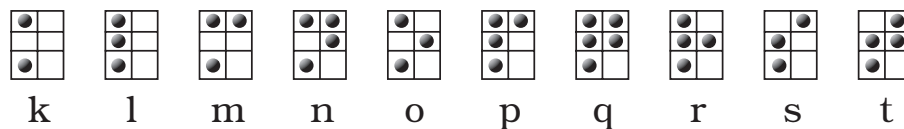
Louis Braille (1809–1852) devised his dot system of writing in 1824, at the age of fifteen. Today, it is used for every language on the earth. The braille system is just as much for writing as for reading. With it, a person can write stories, compose music, and do complicated problems in physics, chemistry, and math.

1	4
2	5
3	6

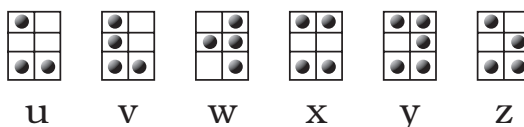
At the heart of the braille system is the cell or grid of six squares. Another important feature is its simplicity. The first ten letters look like this:



The next ten letters are the same except for the addition of a dot in the third square.



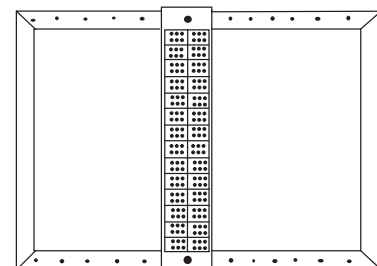
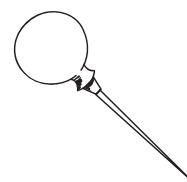
The last six letters also look like A through J with some small differences.



Can you find them?

In Louis Braille's day, the students punched the dots with a stylus, a pointed tool. They used a slate to make perfect cells and keep the words all on one line. They also "punch-wrote" backward so that when they turned the paper over, they could "finger-read" the raised dots the right way.

Today there are computers that punch out braille at great speed. There are even ways for computers to translate the Internet into instant braille and for braille users to access any Web site in the world.



Adapted from an article and art by James Rumford